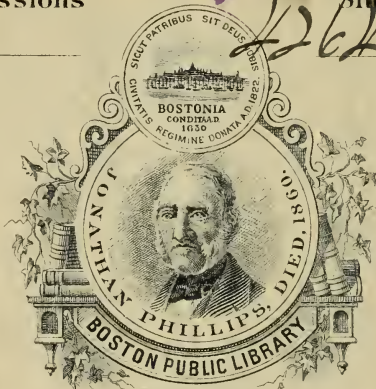


Accessions

Shelf No.

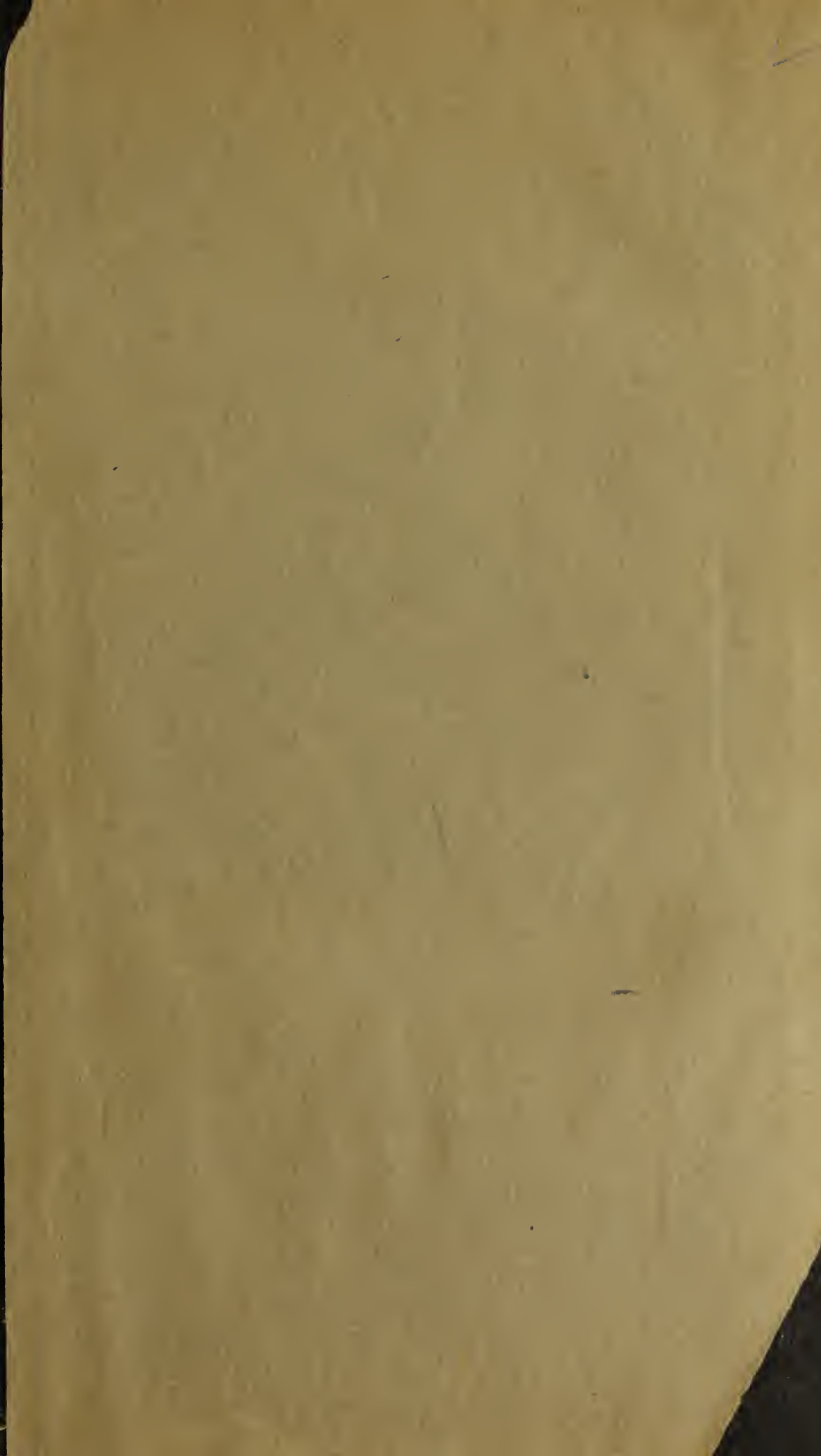
267.60



FROM THE

Phillips Fund.

Added





FIRST OF AUGUST.

ABOLITION

OF THE

APPRENTICESHIP.

By Geo. Thompson

EDINBURGH:

W. OLIPHANT AND SONS;

AND

GEORGE GALLIE & W. SMEAL, GLASGOW.

1838.

THE HISTORY OF THE



REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

LONDON :

J. HADDON, PRINTER, CASTLE STREET, FINSBURY

ABOLITION

OF THE

APPRENTICESHIP.

THE cause of humanity has triumphed! The Abolitionists of Great Britain have succeeded in their truly noble effort. This nation is called upon to offer devout thanks to God, on account of the unexampled success which has been granted to the labours of those, who nine months ago entered on a course of peaceful agitation to effect the extinction of the vile system of negro apprenticeship. The freedom of half a million of their fellow-creatures has been given them as their reward. The glorious results of their exertions are calculated to rebuke the timidity of those who counselled peace and foretold defeat, and to humble and instruct the men, who from their high places looked down with scorn upon the gathering of 'the sacramental host,' declaring in their pride and power their determination to 'stifle' the holy excitement. When these lines shall be read, negro apprenticeship will have ceased in the islands of Tortola, Montserrat, Nevis, the Bahamas, Tobago, Dominica, St. Christopher, St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbadoes, and Jamaica; and we believe also in Honduras, St. Lucia, Trinidad, and British Guiana.

With what rapture will the First of August be hailed in the West Indies! On that auspicious day, thousands of husbands will be restored to their wives—mothers will be free to nurse and provide for their children, and old and young will rejoice together in the termination of a system which made them the victims of a cruel mockery, and an insatiate avarice. And here we may well pause for a moment, to inquire by what means this victory has been obtained. Through a willing government, kindly and

promptly co-operating with a generous and humane public? No. By the authority of the legislature, exerted in obedience to the expressed will of every constituency in the kingdom? No. Appeals to government there have been, but they have been disregarded and resisted. Petitions to parliament, urgent and endless there have been, but they have been set aside with indifference and disgust. Prayers have been offered at the foot of the throne—the sympathy of a maiden queen has been invoked—but our young sovereign has never been advised by those about her person, to reap gratitude and glory, by granting the wish of her loyal and loving people. The victory has been achieved by the unaided power of truth—by the irresistible might of public opinion, brought to bear upon the fears and interests, and we believe upon the consciences too in many cases, of the far-off colonies themselves. The work has been prosecuted in the belief that so just a cause could not but prosper if espoused by such a nation as this, and in reliance upon Him, who, when forgotten and set at nought by rulers and legislators, is able to accomplish, by the humblest instruments, his benign purposes, and cause even the wrath of wicked men to contribute ultimately to his praise. In the most unpromising seasons we have been hopeful and assured; and though recent events have in some respects exceeded even *our* anticipations, we have looked with confidence to see that day of freedom which now dawns upon the dwelling of the negro, and gladdens the banks of the Essequibo and the islands of the greater and lesser Antilles. Most justly did Lord Brougham observe upon a recent occasion, when describing the feelings with which he had pursued his anti-slavery labours, that ‘even when his mind had been most depressed by the prospect before him, and the circumstances around him, he had never for an instant felt a doubt of the ultimate success of the cause. At all times he had had to support him, the public mind of the country. At all times he had marked the question as gloriously distinguished from all others. It lulled and laid asleep for the occasion, every difference of political opinion, every religious or sectarian animosity, every feeling of a factious or violent character; while humanity, and sound policy, and the Christian principle of the country, were all aroused and called into full and active energy. This it was that had kept up his spirits and sustained his mind, even when outnumbered by the representatives of the people in the ratio of three and four to one.’

Let us advert to the state of the population in the slave colonies in the month of July, 1834. We have with much care compiled from official sources the following table, which will exhibit the total number of slaves for whom compensation was received, and also show the manner in which they were divided, and the number belonging to each class :

	Prædials.	Non-Prædials.	Children under six years.	Aged and Non-Effective.	Total.
CHARTERED COLONIES.					
Jamaica.....	218,456	36,384	39,013	16,767	311,070
Barbadoes.....	52,193	14,445	14,732	1,780	83,150
Antigua.....	20,368	2,982	4,327	1,444	29,121
Grenada.....	16,940	2,069	3,320	1,309	23,638
St. Vincent... ..	15,309	2,805	2,963	1,189	22,266
St. Christopher....	12,601	3,066	3,198	915	19,780
Dominica.....	10,465	1,199	2,113	398	14,175
Tobago.....	8,266	812	1,479	1,032	11,589
Bahamas.....	4,290	3,444	2,053	299	10,086
Nevis.....	5,299	1,926	1,261	329	8,815
Montserrat.....	4,510	516	1,145	230	6,401
Virgin Islands....	3,416	902	749	68	5,135
Bermuda.....	18	3,296	606	106	4,026
CROWN COLONIES.					
British Guiana....	63,282	6,297	9,893	3,352	82,824
Mauritius—.....	34,424	22,275	7,612	2,302	66,613
Cape of Good Hope		30,010	5,732		35,742
Trinidad.....	13,773	3,766	2,246	872	20,657
St. Lucia.....	8,723	1,605	1,957	1,006	13,291
Honduras.....	810	778	224	90	1,902
Total..	493,143	139,027	104,623	33,488	770,281

To the above may be added the free coloured population in 1834, say..... 165,000
Whites, say..... 130,000

Total amount of population in the above colonies.. 1,065,281

Such was the state of the slave colonies on the 31st of July, 1834. On the 1st of August, 1834, the children of slaves under six years of age were declared free, leaving 665,648 above that age in the relation of apprentices. Of these, 139,027 being classed non-prædials, were entitled to their freedom on the 1st of August, 1838, leaving the various descriptions of prædials, amounting to 526,621, to remain in servitude till the 1st of August, 1840. The friends of the negro, aware, from the best authority, of the grievous and oppressive character of the apprenticeship, resolved to make a great effort to effect the emancipation of the prædial apprentices on the day fixed for the freedom of the non-prædials. Their labours, their defeats, and their successes, are alike with-

out a parallel in the annals of philanthropic exertion. During the short space of eight months, three meetings of delegates, and five immense public meetings were held in the metropolis, besides innumerable public meetings and lectures in every part of the kingdom. Thus much of their labours. In the cabinet and the legislature (with one exception, the majority of three, upon the motion of Sir Eardley Wilmot,) they met with successive defeats, and were at last doomed to see the question dismissed for the present Session, by the adoption of Lord Glenelg's Bill, and the virtual revocation, by ministerial agency, of the decision of the Commons on the 22nd of May. The treatment experienced by the abolitionists at the hands of the Government, and the representatives of the people, we believe to be without an example. Long ought it to be referred to, to guide the electors of this empire in their future choice of those who shall be raised to a position in which they may, if disposed, overrule the will of the people, however reasonable and righteous their demand, and however strongly fortified by the previous payment of their money for the thing for which they pray. Deeply shall we lament, if, in the general rejoicing which the overthrow of the apprenticeship will occasion, the heartless and wicked conduct of her Majesty's ministers, and their pliant majorities, is suffered to pass into oblivion. Their speeches, their votes and their Acts, should be placed in imperishable record, side by side with the high achievements of the indomitable champions of the oppressed, that posterity may be warned from placing dependence on men, however high their professions, and encouraged at the same time to attempt great deeds, even when forsaken by the men they have appointed, and paid, and vested with the power to accomplish them.

In the midst of disaster and defeat at home, the work of mercy commenced and proceeded abroad. In the month of December, 1837, the island of MONTserrat set the example of voluntary emancipation, by passing an Act, the clauses of which are to the following effect:

‘ 1.—Repeals Abolition Act, and all Acts auxiliary thereto, on the first day of August next. 2.—Apprenticeship to cease and determine, and all classes of labourers to be free on the said first day of August, 1838. 3.—Persons discharged from apprenticeship entitled to relief. 4.—Owners or directors of plantations to provide for diseased, aged, and infirm persons on their estates. Penalty of £5 for each offence, recoverable before any two or more justices; justices to issue warrant to bring offenders before them. If offenders convicted, and penalty not forthwith paid, to be committed to common gaol not exceeding twenty days. Penalties, when recovered, to be paid into the public treasury. In case any dispute arise as to the right of any party claiming to be maintained, then two justices, with the aid of a medical man, are to make a binding decision. 5.—If further compensation awarded

beyond £20,000,000 to be paid to the persons suffering pecuniary loss by the abridgment of the term of apprenticeship. 6.—Suspending clause.’

In April, of the present year, an Act of Emancipation on the 1st of August, passed the legislature of Nevis and the Virgin Islands. The following is an extract from a private letter to the Governor, dated Tortola, 13th of April, 1838.

‘The General Emancipation Bills passed yesterday after a strong opposition.

‘The news of the Bill having passed spread like wild-fire, and I was delighted on riding out last evening at the hearty salutations of the negroes.

‘It is already evident that *these measures will prove highly beneficial*, as the people will quietly and contentedly slide into the new state of things, being aware a boon has been granted them. *I do not think a single planter who has any tact will lose a man who is worth keeping.*’

ST. CHRISTOPHER next followed. The letter of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Henry Macleod, to Lord Glenelg, will show the steps which led to the event. The part we have printed in italics is amusing.

‘Government House, May 18, 1838.

‘My Lord,—As it is impossible to communicate through Sir Wm. Colebrooke by this packet (which is hourly expected here), I have the pleasure to announce that the Legislature of this colony have resolved to abolish the apprenticeship system on the 1st of August next, and I have the honour to inclose the duplicate of a despatch I have addressed to his Excellency on the subject.

‘I have, &c.,

(signed)

H. MACLEOD, Lieutenant-Governor.’

(Enclosure.)

‘Government House, May 18, 1838.

‘Sir,—My correspondence will have shown your Excellency that although I had hitherto failed in my attempts with the legislation for the abolition of the apprenticeship system in August next, I was still led to think it would eventually be adopted. Having pressed the matter, *I was asked for a dissolution, that the members might take the sense of their constituents. Your Excellency will think with me that in a small island like this, and where fifteen members for the rural parishes in the absence of the proprietary body are returned by thirty-five voters, it was not necessary;* and I was also aware that one great object was to throw out four members who support the government. Knowing likewise that parties at the time were nearly balanced on the question, I thought it politic neither to risk the loss of those I could depend upon, nor fair on these gentlemen not to have a voice in a popular measure, throughout which they have supported me. I did not therefore consent; but finding there was a great inclination, particularly in the

council, to reconsider the subject, I prorogued, and yesterday again submitted the abolition of the system on the 1st of August next, which I have great satisfaction in announcing for the information of Her Majesty's government was carried *unanimously in the Council, and with hardly a dissentient voice in the Assembly.*'

ST. VINCENT. Copy of a despatch from Lieutenant-Governor Tyler to Lord Glenelg:

'Government House, St. Vincent, May 12, 1838.

'My Lord,—It is with no ordinary feelings I fulfil the gratifying duty of transmitting to your Lordship direct by the mail, which leaves this evening, the copy of a Bill for abrogating the apprenticeship of prædial labourers in this colony, which passed the legislature yesterday.

'Your Lordship, on reference to my correspondence with his Excellency the Governor-in-chief on the 25th and 26th of April, will observe, I anticipated such a measure; I was not mistaken; its attainment, I am proud to say for the honour of the colony, has been accomplished, as your Lordship will see by the inclosed address from the Council and Assembly, spontaneously and unanimously, with a *perfect confidence in its results.*'

'To his Excellency George Tyler, Lieutenant-Governor, &c. &c. &c.

'Sir,—We, the Members of Her Majesty's Council, and the Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly, respectfully approach and place in the hands of your Excellency a Bill, intituled, 'An Act to abrogate the Apprenticeship of Prædial Labourers in the Island of St. Vincent and its Dependencies.'

'In passing this most important measure, the two branches of the legislature are not insensible of *the difficulties, the sacrifice, and inconvenience which will fall with much severity on persons in all professions, circumstances, and situations*; but, actuated by a spirit of benevolence and an enlarged philanthropy, they are of opinion they have not granted the boon of emancipation upon any conditions *inconsistent with the character, the safety, and the true interests of the country.*'

The Lieutenant-Governor replied in the following terms:

'The Lieutenant-Governor, in congratulating the Honourable Board of Council and the Honourable House of Assembly on the measure of emancipation which they have spontaneously and honourably granted to the prædial labourers by the Bill now before him, cannot but express his firm conviction that this instance of their liberality will *best insure the permanent welfare of the colony*; that, by cheerfully meeting the end which could not be indefinitely postponed, they have adopted the *safest and most certain means to encourage that confidence and willing intercourse*, which, by directing the energies to industrious exertion, will *convert our rural population into a faithful and happy peasantry.*'

It is difficult to perceive how a measure confessedly consistent with the 'safety and true interests of the colony,' calculated to encourage confidence and willing intercourse, and to 'convert a slave

population into a faithful and happy peasantry,' can be fraught with 'difficulties, sacrifice, and inconvenience to persons in all 'professions, circumstances, and situations.' The following are the provisions of the Act :

' 1.—Terminates the apprenticeship on the 1st of August, 1838. 2.—Renders unlawful the eviction from their habitations of labourers willing to work for wages (unless for ill conduct*) before the 1st of August, 1839; also of persons who from disease are incapable of earning their subsistence. 3.—Makes it imperative on masters to give food, &c., to those not able to earn their subsistence until parochial laws are made. 4.—Provides for the settlement of disputed claims. 5.—Mode of proceeding of justices and appropriation of penalties.'

BARBADOES, with fifty-four thousand prædial apprentices, quickly followed the good example of the islands we have named, and left all eyes directed to Jamaica. On the 11th of April, Lord Glenelg's Act to amend the Act for the Abolition of Slavery, received Her Majesty's assent, and was almost immediately sent out to Jamaica, accompanied by a despatch from Lord Glenelg, explaining the provisions of his Act and concluding as follows :

' Although in pursuance of the instruction which I have addressed to you, you will give immediate effect to this law. I think it desirable that you should at an early opportunity convene the legislature of the colony under your Government, and communicate to it the intelligence that Parliament has found it necessary to pass this Act in furtherance of the great measure for the abolition of slavery. You will further explain to them the course which her Majesty's Government have felt it their duty to adopt, in resisting the demand for the early abolition of negro apprenticeship by the authority of the Imperial Parliament, you will at the same time impress upon their most serious attention, *how deeply seated, and how generally prevalent throughout the population of this kingdom, is the solicitude for bringing, if possible, to an early close the system of apprenticeship, established by the Act of 1833.* You will point out to them the obvious, but weighty motives which recommend that this consummation should be effected by the spontaneous act of the legislatures of the respective colonies, due preparation being first made for those amendments of the colonial code which must accompany or precede the change. You will suggest the policy and expediency of their anticipating by *wise and humane enactments* the wishes and desires of the people of this country, on a subject on which so deep and general an interest is felt. By such a course they would avoid the serious embarrassment and inconveniences which may be apprehended from *the effect on the minds of the negroes from the repeated discussions and continued agitation of this question during the*

* Much will depend upon the persons authorized to decide upon alleged cases of 'ill conduct.'

remaining term of the apprenticeship, if it should not be abridged, and they would conciliate the gratitude and good-will of the labouring population, in whose disposition to work for fair remuneration and on equitable terms, the proprietors will be hereafter in a great measure dependent. I am persuaded that no exertion will be wanting on your part to allay excitement, and to produce good will and harmony among the different classes of the community, an object in which the interests of all are most deeply concerned.'

On the 16th of July we were in possession of Jamaica papers with the intelligence of the steps taken on the arrival of the new law and the despatch of the Colonial Secretary. The House of Assembly was convened on the 5th of June, and the proceedings of the two branches of the legislature opened by a speech from the Governor, his Excellency Sir Lionel Smith. We give the important passages. We have been informed by one present on the occasion, that the speech was delivered with a firm and decided tone, sufficiently indicative of his Excellency's determination to be trifled with no longer. One extract will be found worthy of a careful perusal.

'I have called you together at an unusual season, to take into your consideration the state of the island under the laws of apprenticeship for the labouring population.

'I need not refer you to the agitation on this subject throughout the British empire, or to the discussions upon it in parliament, where the honourable efforts of the ministry were barely found sufficient to preserve the original duration of the law, as an obligation of national faith.

'General agitation, and parliamentary interference, have not, I am afraid, yet terminated.

'A corresponding excitement has been long going on among the apprentices themselves; but still they have rested in sober and quiet hopes, relying on your generosity, that you will extend to them that boon which has been granted to their class in other colonies.

'In this posture of affairs, it is my duty to declare my sentiments, and distinctly to recommend to you the early and equal abolition of apprenticeship for all classes. I do so, in confidence, that the apprentices will be found worthy of freedom, and that it will operate as a double blessing, by securing also the future interests of the planters.

'I am commanded, however, to inform you, that her Majesty's ministers will not entertain any question of further compensation.

'But should your views be opposed to the policy I recommend, I would entreat you to consider well, how impracticable it will become to carry coercive labour. Always difficult, it would, in future, be in peril of constant comparison with other colonies made free, and with those estates in this island made free by individual proprietors.

'As governor, under these circumstances, I never shrink from any of my responsibilities, I PRONOUNCE IT PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO

MAINTAIN THE APPRENTICESHIP WITH ANY HOPE OF SUCCESSFUL AGRICULTURE.

‘Jamaica is in your hands—she requires repose, by the removal of a law, which has equally tormented the labourer, and disappointed the planter; a law by which man still constrains man in unnatural servitude. This is her first exigency. For her future welfare, she appeals to your wisdom to legislate in the spirit of the times, with liberality and benevolence towards all classes.’

The reply of the council is dignified, liberal, and conciliating. They say,—

‘Being aware of the agitation on this subject throughout the British empire, and of the discussion on it in parliament, we duly appreciate the honourable (?) efforts of her Majesty’s ministers, to preserve the original duration of the law as an obligation of national faith.

‘We feel confident that the hopes of the apprentices will not be disappointed, and that the wisdom and generosity of the legislature of Jamaica, will not hesitate to extend to them that boon which has been granted to their class in other colonies.

‘We cordially concur in your Excellency’s wise and humane recommendation, of an early and equal abolition of the apprenticeship of all classes, and feel pleasure in recording our perfect conviction, that the apprentices will be found worthy of freedom in every respect, and will so conduct themselves in their altered condition, as to insure the future interests of the planters.

‘Coercive labour has, at all times, been obtained with difficulty; but under the present peculiar circumstances of this island, we fear it might be impossible to maintain the apprenticeship with any hope of successful agriculture.

‘Jamaica does, indeed, require repose, and we are sanguine in the expectation that, under Divine Providence, such laws will be passed by her legislature as will evince their desire to act with liberality and benevolence towards all classes.’

So, then, it is manifest at last, that the abolitionists have been all along right in their judgment of the character of the negro, the true interests of the planters, and the policy most likely to promote the welfare of the colonies. The council of Jamaica being judges, the negroes are ‘*worthy of freedom in every respect*, and will so conduct themselves, as to INSURE THE FUTURE INTERESTS OF THE PLANTERS!’ The whole tone and tenor of this reply will appear most extraordinary to those who are acquainted with the history and past conduct of the chief actors in this novel scene.

The reply of the assembly savours strongly of haughtiness and petulance, and shows clearly, that their *voluntary* act was sheer *compulsion*.

‘ May it please your Excellency,

‘ We, her Majesty’s dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of Jamaica, thank your Excellency for your speech at the opening of the session; and we duly appreciate the consideration evinced by your Excellency in convening this general Assembly on the earliest day consistent with the public welfare to meet the present emergency.

‘ On receiving the despatch alluded to by your Excellency, we shall proceed, in the critical position in which the island is placed, to give to the momentous matters submitted to us our most serious consideration

‘ Jamaica does, indeed, require repose, and we anxiously hope, that should we determine to remove an unnatural servitude, we shall be left in the exercise of our constitutional privileges to legislate for the benefit of all classes without any further parliamentary interference.

‘ The apprenticeship was forced on the acceptance of the house as one of the precautionary measures to be adopted in the transition from slavery to freedom, and was a portion of our compensation. While, therefore, we discuss the propriety of its abolition, we neither assume the responsibility, nor exonerate public faith.’

On Thursday the 7th of June, a bill for the termination of apprenticeship on the 1st of August, 1838, was brought in by Mr. Guy, of St. George’s, and referred to a Committee. On the 8th it was passed ‘ *without the voice of a single member being raised against it.*’ After this the friends of humanity need never despair, how violent soever may be the opposition of the parties interested in the continuance of the evil they seek to remove. Let the advocates of negro freedom, in America and every other place gather courage from the contemplation of the events which have transpired in Jamaica, and persevere in the use of those moral means which have so signally triumphed in the most contumacious and rebellious colony of the British crown.

We have been greatly edified and amused by the perusal of the three days’ debates in the House of Assembly, and, especially, with the singular zeal displayed in behalf of immediate abolition. Some honourable members desired it by the following Sunday, while others would have bestowed it on the day of her Majesty’s coronation. The majority, however, deemed the 1st of August the most appropriate period, and thus the day prescribed by the people of this country will be literally observed, according to their wishes.

The bill, as it has passed the House of Assembly, consists of three clauses; the first declares the apprenticeship at an end on the 1st of August next; the second repeals all acts relating to apprenticeship; and the third recites the clause in the supplemental abolition act which passed during the previous session, authorising the proprietors to serve notices on labourers to quit. The council, it is said, intend to propose as amendments, that

the second clause of the bill be dele'd, and the concluding portion of the clause be also struck out.

We confess we should have preferred a simple declaratory Act abolishing slavery on the 1st of August, to the one adopted by the assembly. We think the provisions annexed to the abolition clause detract from its beauty and grandeur. Measures for the protection of the negroes in the occupation of their houses, and for the maintenance of the aged and infirm, might have been subsequently and separately enacted.

Amongst the motives which led to the passing of this act by the Jamaica House of Assembly, we think the following were the principal. A wish to avoid the infraction of their charter by carrying into effect the provisions of the odious bill of Lord Glenelg, and to escape the degradation and subjection consequent thereon. A conviction of the utter impossibility of making the apprenticeship work beyond the 1st of August, and their knowledge of the determination of the people of England to continue their agitation, and renew their appeal for parliamentary interposition. And lastly, their belief in the fitness of the negro for entire freedom, and his disposition to cultivate the soil as a paid labourer. The minds of the legislators of Jamaica and the planters generally were no doubt considerably influenced by the wise and seasonable letter of the Marquis of Sligo, addressed to the members of the Assembly on the 31st of March, last. We shall offer no apology for transcribing a considerable part of this valuable document, declaring, however, our unqualified disapprobation of the motive urged by the noble Lord in the passage we have distinguished by italics. After adverting to the trying circumstances under which he assumed the administration of affairs in the island, and to the manner in which his conduct had been regarded by the government and people of England, he proceeds :

‘I wish to induce you to pay more attention to what I say now, than you did when I was governor of your colony.—What might then have been supposed to be dictation, I hope you will receive as advice from a person connected with Jamaica, as well by interest as inclination, and who can have no possible motive for misleading you. If I have been so fortunate as to prove to you, that on the occasions alluded to, I correctly represented to you the wishes of the British nation, I hope it may induce you to attach some weight to my observations and suggestions.

‘In the first place, look at the position in which you are placed with regard to parties in the senate, and in the country generally. The feelings of the government are pretty clearly shown, by the bill to ‘Amend the Abolition Law,’ which Lord Glenelg proposed to parliament, the effect of which is utterly to extinguish your legislative importance, no matter what character you may attribute to the bill, or however unconstitutional or unjust you may deem it to be.

‘What are the opinions of the Tories? These may be gathered from the few words which fell from their leader, the Duke of Wellington, on the discussion of Lord Glenelg’s bill. It is, moreover, currently reported and credited, that his grace informed your agent, that your conduct had imposed silence on your best friends in this country; and believe me, I pray you, that I say this, not for the purpose of irritating you, but to point out to you faithfully your position.

‘The declaration of the Bishop of London, a prelate whose talents, learning, and character give his opinions so much weight, as well with the country as with his brethren, shows what the church feels on this subject; the still more recent declarations of the other bishops amply confirm this assertion.

‘The opinions of the party usually known here under the denomination of Radicals, have been too decidedly pronounced to render observation respecting them necessary.

‘Thus, does it appear, with the exception, perhaps, of a few proprietors, the majority of whom have no personal acquaintance with the colonies, but adopt the opinions which you, in your individual capacities as their land agents, send home to them, there is not a person in the senate who is disposed to deny that you have forfeited all your original constitutional rights, how great soever they may have been. Such being the state of feeling in the senate, what is it in the country generally?

‘Every morning’s mail brings from four to five hundred proofs of want of confidence, so generally felt, in the shape of so many petitions to parliament, from all parts of the country.

‘The anxiety of the inhabitants of this great metropolis, the seat of so much wealth, of so much mercantile speculation, and consequently of so much influence over the public mind, has been exhibited in an unparalleled manner of the late public meeting at Exeter Hall. The annals of history do not produce such decided and such extraordinary proofs of the universality of public opinion on one point, as the occurrences of the last few days.

‘The resolution in favour of the immediate abolition of the apprenticeship was indeed thrown out last night in the House of Commons, owing to the feeling on the part of the government, that they were bound to support the compact which they considered they had entered into with the colonists; but what was the number of the minority? Two hundred and fifteen! Was there ever so great a minority on the first division on any popular question? Do you not think that with such a number of advocates already in the House of Commons, the unanimity of public opinion will presently induce others to think that there is more safety in granting than refusing? It is quite impossible that the present system can go on. Such another victory will be your ruin; yet perhaps you may have letters sent to you by this packet, informing you that nothing can be more signal than the defeat of Sturge and Co., that the party is annihilated, and their sun is set to rise no more! Place no credit in such fallacious statements. It is by similar injudicious advice, which you have been so long in the habit of receiving,

that you have been brought to your present condition ; for a more complete annihilation of all your rights than you have been subjected to in Lord Glenelg's bill could not have been desired. Not one person lifted up his voice on your behalf in last night's debate ; your condemnation went so far, that Sir Edward Sugden, who opposed the abolition as a general measure, said that a complete case was made out against Jamaica, and that though none of the other colonies deserved it, Jamaica ought undoubtedly to lose the last two years of the apprenticeship. As far as your importance is concerned, the abolition of the apprenticeship could not have been more injurious than the bill of Lord Glenelg promises to be. How are you to save yourselves ? Your course is easy. You can, as you did on a former occasion, legislate before any law passed in this country can have force in the colony. You have now something to give. You may, by your own act, place the negroes in the position which the anti-slavery party is labouring to put them in, and great would be the advantage of the former obtaining the boon at your hands. You have now, as I have before said, something to give ; if you avail yourself of the present opportunity, and do away with the apprenticeship, you will abandon that which, under the excitement at present existing, or that will inevitably spring up the moment that the extraordinary state of public opinion in England is known in Jamaica, can be of little value ; you will supersede the operation of Lord Glenelg's bill, and save your political existence. Mr. Ellis's letter to his constituents at Coventry has made much noise here, and its sentiments are very generally approved of. If this agitation continues, and is directed against the continued existence of the colonial legislatures, it will find the minds of men predisposed to give it welcome. *Make your bargain now, while you have something to give, and you will in return get laws consented to, which you will not have the slightest chance of obtaining when you shall have exacted your pound of flesh in 1840.*

Let me, in conclusion, again apprise you of the good feeling which prompts me in writing this letter. I desire to persuade you to an act of grace, that will redound to your honour, and I am convinced, to your advantage. With such an object in view, I would not seek to irritate you, but it is necessary to place things in a proper light before you. Some of the happiest days of my life were passed among you, and whether you give me credit for it or not, there is not an individual in the island, who more sincerely prays your prosperity than, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

London, March 31st, 1838.

SLIGO.

The packet which announced the abolition of the apprenticeship in Jamaica, brought also the intelligence of the adoption of a similar measure in the island of Granada. This cheering information arrived very providentially on the morning of the day on which Lord Brougham moved in the House of Lords 'that an 'humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her 'Majesty would be graciously pleased to issue an order in

‘council forthwith, to put a period, under proper provisions and regulations, to negro apprenticeship, in the unchartered colonies ‘of the crown.’ His Lordship argued the want of power in the crown colonies to effect the general emancipation of the apprentices, and showed that in some of them there were peculiar and pressing reasons for the immediate intervention of imperial authority. ‘The crown was to them what the House ‘of Assembly and the Legislative Council were to Jamaica and ‘Barbadoes.’

*‘It was in the savannahs of Trinidad, and upon the alluvial soil of Guiana, that human life was most prodigally wasted in ministering to European avarice, and it was there that it behoved the mother country to interpose to put a stop to the inhuman deaths, to the diseases which were felt to be more cruel than death, to the fatal contamination which the necessity of labouring on those fatally unwholesome plains inflicted on those wretched victims of our pride. But the voice from Mauritius, which pierced their ear, and rended the silence of that eastern sea, was aggravated in its tones of pity, and fell still harsher upon their ears, from this hard addition to the lot of the slave, that three out of four of those who have cultivated the plains of Mauritius, all suffering worse torments than even those which were inflicted upon the negroes of Guiana and of Trinidad, had never in their lives been made legally slaves at all. They had been transported thither, not only against the law of nature, but after the law of this land had made transportation of the slave a capital crime; and 30,000 capital felonies had been committed in conveying 30,000 of these victims of their weakness, and planting them under the unwholesome climate, and upon the unwholesome soil of that Mauritius. If ever there had been a signal neglect of duty upon the part of a legislature, it was theirs, in not having at once broken through the fetters of a mere legal informality, and passed a new law to prevent the recurrence of those monstrous outrages; but in paying, on the contrary, the frightful sum of 20,000,000*l.* sterling as compensation to those capital felons, instead of giving them their deserts upon the gallows.’*

His Lordship’s eloquent exposure and denunciation of the ‘felons’ of Mauritius were richly merited, as was also his impeachment of the gross misconduct of the government in respect of that colony. The profound silence of the Colonial Secretary upon the subject was significant. The bold charges of Lord Brougham were allowed to pass without notice. The first Lord of the Treasury and his colleagues tacitly pleaded guilty to the indictment. We could have wished that the noble orator had been even more severe in his rebuke of the patrons and the paymasters of the felon flesh-factors of Mauritius. Hereafter we may feel it our duty to drag to light some of the dark doings of those who have for years been among the most shameless and lawless traffickers in the bodies of men, and who are now engaged in kidnapping, from the plains of India, thousands of fresh

victims to plant the sugar-cane upon the graves of the tens of thousands they have immolated. His Lordship pointed out most forcibly the benefits already derived from the free system in Antigua, and the danger of procrastination on the part of the crown, after what had taken place in the chartered colonies. 'A day's delay might be mischievous, a month's might be ruinous, half a year's might be fatal.'

'By all these considerations (concluded the noble Lord) by the character which this country has ever held for fortitude in war, and courtesy in peace, and clemency to fallen foes—by the patience which this country has ever displayed under its burdens and its sufferings, which however is as nothing when compared with the almost miraculous patience of the negro under the multiplied and monstrous outrages inflicted upon him—by the character which your lordships have acquired for justice, mercy, and religion—the Christian religion above all other religions, which, whenever alluded to, to point a sentence or adorn a period, is so loudly and even pharasaically professed—for pharisaical I will never cease to call it, if, with the gospel on your lips, you show that your hearts are strangers to its spirit—by the groans of myriads of bondsmen, echoed by twenty-four millions of free citizens, who call for justice at your lordships' hands—by all these appeals to your feelings, your principles, and your religion, I claim from your lordships an assent to my motion.'

Lord Glenelg stated in reply, that the Government deemed it the wiser course to oppose the motion of his noble friend, and leave it to the crown colonies to act as the chartered colonies had done.

'The legislatures in the Crown colonies, although not composed or constituted like those of the chartered colonies, yet were as competent to act and to legislate, and as independent in their acts as to internal legislation, as were the legislatures of the chartered colonies themselves.

'It was unnecessary for him, however, to dwell on this part of the subject, because in point of fact the Crown colonies were now taking the same course as the chartered colonies were at that moment pursuing. Early in the present year special letters had been sent out to the governors of the crown colonies directing them to bring the subject under the consideration of their local legislatures, and to state to them the reasons why her Majesty's government wished such a measure to be passed.

'In TRINIDAD the legislature had been convened and met the day before the mail that brought the intelligence which had been already alluded to came away. There had been a message from the governor urging the consideration of this subject, and it had been fixed to be taken into consideration the day after the mail left. It was, however, from the information he had received, fully expected that this Assembly would pass an Act of the same description as had been enacted by those of the other colonies which had been enumerated.

'From ST. LUCIA, the information he (Lord Glenelg) had received to-day, was that the Governor intended under the authority sent him

from home to propose the same course, and no doubt was entertained as to the issue.

‘To GUIANA the same authority had been given—conveyed also in the strongest terms. He would not trouble the House by reading the despatch, but though to-day he had received no official communication on the subject, still he had seen a private letter from a source which could not be questioned, which stated that no doubt existed but that by the court of policy the measure would be sanctioned.

‘As to MAURITIUS he could only say, that there had not been time for information to arrive, but he must add, that the same authority had been repeated by him (Lord Glenelg) to that colony, in equally strong terms as to the other colonies, and that he had no reason to doubt that this instruction or authority would be there received and acted upon as it had been elsewhere. In short, he entertained no doubt but that in the Mauritius the prædial apprentices would be free from the 1st of February, 1839, and with respect to the other three Crown colonies the information he had received left no doubt but two out of the three had accomplished the work of freedom, and that the third was not very far from adopting the same course.

‘Under these circumstances, he should say that in all probability the work was complete; that the powers of these colonies was perfect; and further, that it was more than possible that all these Crown colonies had accomplished the same acts which the chartered colonies had already accomplished. Thus, he conceived that the question had been satisfactorily settled, and without the necessity of the painful alternative suggested by his noble and learned friend. In fact, when the house met again, he had no doubt but that the complete and unqualified termination of apprenticeship would have taken place.’

Lord Brougham replied:

‘He hoped that every event would answer the expectation of his noble friend, and he hoped particular care would be taken that those expectations in the Mauritius should not be frustrated.

‘Lord Glenelg had promised much on behalf of the planters of that island, but he (Lord Brougham) disbelieved in their disposition to comply with the recommendations which had been sent out. A less subordinate and less well-disposed set of men than the residents in the Mauritius it was difficult to find. They had all the prejudices of planters against the negroes, all the prejudices of colonists against the mother country, and, added to these, the accidental prejudices of Frenchmen against Englishmen; and, above all, that strange, but most mistaken prejudice, from which even the most liberal of our neighbours on the other side of the channel were not entirely free—that at the bottom of this question of slavery there was an English interest working against a French interest, and that by following our example they would be falling into some trap prepared for them.

‘With respect to the colonies generally, he knew that much remained to be done. A constantly vigilant eye must be kept over those very self-same assemblies, whether of full or partial legislative authority, which existed in our various colonies. For if they found them under

the name of police regulations, a vagrant act, a poor law bill, or of any other of the devices which he knew their ingenuity and pertinacity full well enough to be apprehensive they would see soon attempted—if, as he had already seen, attempts were made by means of a vagrant act to perpetuate slavery under another name, by the help of the magistrate and the master, whose power had died a natural death; and if, under associations of men armed with power and influence, they saw any attempt to revive under another name and under false pretences that slavery which the law would not suffer to exist under an odious and disgusting appellation any longer—if any such things were attempted, he should not be wanting in the discharge of his duty to expose the violators by evasion, and therefore the worse, because the fraudulent violators of the law.'

Lord Brougham finally withdrew his motion. In the course of the debate he took the opportunity of lifting from the brow of Lord Glenelg the laurel which his lordship, with singular complacency, had assumed, and generously gave the credit of having accomplished the abolition of the cruel system, to those who had laboured upon the highest principles, and with a resolution to which it was owing entirely, that Government had taken any steps towards redressing the wrongs of the apprentice, or enforcing the provisions of the Act of 1833.

We have thus endeavoured, with as much brevity as we deemed consistent with the importance of the subject, to place the present position of the great question of Negro Emancipation before the readers of this journal, and we must now hasten to conclude an article which has already extended itself beyond the limits of the space assigned us. Our duty, however, requires that we call upon every friend of liberty to continue at his post. The present posture of affairs demands wakefulness and foresight. The good obtained must be secured. The evil threatened must be averted. Such laws as the one recently passed in St. Vincent must be exposed and condemned. The Colonial Office, somewhat roused, must be quickened and kept alive by the unceasing activity of the Anti-slavery Societies of the country. Though there may be now less need for declamation, there is unquestionably far greater necessity than ever for the exercise of all the legal acuteness and deliberative talent, which are to be found amongst the promoters of colonial reform. Attention must be turned to the laws of every colony in which emancipation is about to take place, and a vigorous and well directed effort must be made to effect an entire revision of their codes. We rejoice to perceive that the two London Committees are impressed with the importance of this business. Believing that it is the intention of the planters to reduce the emancipated negroes to the condition of serfs, and to establish a system of magisterial despotism through the means of vagrancy and emigration laws, contracts for labour,

police regulations, &c., &c., 'they recommend the appointment of a competent and impartial tribunal in this country, with a view to the immediate inspection of all laws proposed to be passed as accompaniments to the Abolition of Negro apprenticeship:—the complete revision of all colonial laws affecting the constitutional rights and privileges of the coloured classes; and the final establishment of such just and equal principles of government, as shall be authoritative and binding on all future colonial legislation.'

If these things be done, and the efforts of the friends of personal freedom be seconded by enlarged and liberal plans of usefulness on the part of the friends of education and religion, we see no reason to doubt that in a few years the British colonies in the West Indies will be found peopled by communities as free, and prosperous, and happy, as any on the face of the earth. Then will be realized the promises annexed to obedience—when every yoke is broken, and every burden is undone—when the finger of scorn is no longer put forth, and men speak truth instead of vanity and lies—then shall the light break forth as the morning, and the darkness be as the noon-day. Then shall the old waste places be built, the foundations of many generations be raised up, and our righteousness shall be before us, and the glory of the Lord shall bring up the rear.

We had intended to refer to the probable effects of emancipation upon the question of slavery in the United States and elsewhere; to the revival of the slave-trade by Messrs. Gladstone and Co.; and to the success which has attended the exposure of the execrable traffic in Hill Coolies; also to the extent and character of the African slave-trade at the present time; but we are compelled to defer the consideration of these topics. We hope hereafter to give them due consideration, and in the mean time we rejoice with all who love truth and justice, in the issue of a struggle, upon which the historian will dwell as the noblest and brightest feature of the age in which we live.



1870

